

Testimony on Senate Bill 406 before the Senate Judiciary Committee

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I live just a half hour from Glacier National Park – a place known for its bears which I have seen there from a distance. It was however, down on Flathead Lake, that I had a very close encounter with a bear. After driving up a long gravel drive, I noticed as I got out of my car, four large furry bands on a tree just three feet away. They looked like giant caterpillars. As I was reaching out to touch one, the bear stuck its head out from behind the tree. After retreating to the safety of my car, I observed the bear as it got down from the tree and proceeded to eat berries from an adjacent bush.

Standing and eating, the bear had a torso with legs and arms much like a human has. It's head had eyes that could see me, ears that heard my approach, a nose to smell and a mouth that ate the berries. The bear has a digestive system and a heart that circulates blood through it's body.

The question is, what is the essential difference between the bear, which is an animal and a human, who is a person. The answer is that a person has a soul and an animal does not have a soul.

The powers of the soul are to think and to make decisions – to rationalize. That is why persons are sometimes referred to as rational beings. Part of the powers of soul are the ability to create things such as a work of art, a piece of music, a poem or a story or a cure for a disease. I was grateful that Jonas Salk, for example, was given the ability to create a vaccine that has eradicated polio on this continent. Not every soul has the same talents and abilities. Each soul created by God is distinct and unique just like the fingerprints on our hands and each soul is given all it needs to live in this life. Animals are created for the pleasure of man, but human persons are created for the pleasure of God. It is for this reason that the soul is immortal and our true destination is to live with God.

A second question is when is each soul created. The answer is that the soul is the beginning of life for a person and is created at the moment of conception and at that moment our personhood comes into existence. If there was no soul created, there could be no conception. This is affirmed through Old Testament Scripture in the book of Jeremiah when God speaking to Jeremiah says: Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. It is the soul with all its latent gifts and talents that gives us life and that life is what makes us persons created in the image of God.

What we are asking for in Bill 406 is to let the People of Montana affirm, in a referendum, that we are persons from the beginning, from the moment of conception, and therefore the words of our Montana Constitution should reflect that concept.

It would be nice to have a unanimous vote of Democrats and Republicans in favor of this bill. It would be an affirmation of your own personhood.

Thank-you very much for your attention to this very serious matter.